

The Museum

ARTH 394 sec 001 • ARTH 594 sec 001

Tuesdays, 4:30 – 7:10

Hanover L003

Spring 2024

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Office hours: virtual, by request at <https://gmucampus.eab.com/pal/k-OKVShxt5>

Course Information

3 credit hours. Examines history, theory, practice, ethics, and current problems of collecting and displaying art and artifacts to the public. Emphasizes issues central to museums in Washington, D.C., or museums in other locations.

Mason Core: Synthesis

Description

This course will focus on the emergence and development of museums in the western world; the role of museums in social, educational, and political life; and the history and theory of collecting. We often think of museums as neutral institutions with a purely educational purpose, but we will see that throughout the modern era they have been associated with political and social messages as well. What are the origins of the modern museum? Where do the pieces in museums come from and to whom do they belong? What kinds of narratives have museums created and reinforced in their visitors? What happens to an object when it is removed from its context and placed in a museum? We will address all these questions as we trace the development of museums from their medieval origins to the twenty-first century.

Goals

By participating in this course, students should meet the following goals:

- understand the history, origins, and development of the modern museum
- synthesize information to articulate critical responses to objects and texts
- analyze and evaluate museological and curatorial practices in their historical context
- develop skills of academic communication, both written and oral

Mason Core

The Synthesis requirement provides students with the opportunity to synthesize the knowledge, skills and values gained from the Mason Core curriculum. Synthesis courses strive to expand students' ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills across the disciplines. Read about the Synthesis category at: <https://masoncore.gmu.edu/mason-core-course-categories/synthesis/>

Class Communication

The best way to reach me is by email at vschulma@gmu.edu. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. I will send important reminders to your GMU email, so be sure you check that account or have your mail forwarded to an account you check regularly.

Readings

Readings will be made available as PDFs or links on Blackboard. There are no materials to purchase for this class. Readings should be completed before the class meeting for which they are listed. This is a reading-intensive course of approximately 50 pages per week.

Grading and Assignments:

Participation	15%
“AQUA” Discussion Preparation	20%
Short Papers (3)	30%
Final Project	25%
Presentation	10%

Participation: There are three components making up this assessment category:

5% of your grade is determined by **my** assessment of your participation. This is based on quality (relevance; engagement with materials) not quantity (frequent, off-topic, contributions; dominating the conversation).

5% of your grade is determined by **your** assessment of your participation. At the end of each meeting, you will fill out an exit ticket evaluating your weekly performance.

5% of your grade is determined by short **group** activities completed during class. Each activity will have a small deliverable, such as a flash presentation. All members of the group will receive the same grade.

“AQUA” Discussion Preparation: The class will be broken into groups. I expect everyone to be prepared to discuss all assigned readings each week, but your group will be assigned a single text to focus on, which will be the subject of your “AQUA” report. These must be turned in at the end of each class (typed or handwritten hard copy). The report consists of the following four parts:

- **Argument:** What is the main thesis or argument that the author is trying to get across? In other words, what is the main “take-away” message of this reading? (about 2-4 sentences)
- **Questions:** Substantive questions that have been generated by your reading of the article. These should not be questions that can be answered with a yes/no or a simple fact; rather they should be designed to provoke conversation. (2-3 questions)
- **Use:** How could the information in this article be used by art historians, students, museum professionals, or other audiences? Does it have a practical application, or is it more of theoretical interest? What is its significance? What fields outside art history might find value in this reading, and why? (about one paragraph)
- **Assessment:** What methods or approaches does the author use? What prior knowledge is required to understand the author’s arguments? Finally, in your opinion, what is one area that could be improved in this reading? It could be a gap in the evidence, a missed opportunity, a topic you wanted to hear more about, or something else. (about 1-2 paragraphs)

Short Papers (3): Three 2-3 page papers, reflecting on visits to three different kinds of museums (at least one must be an art museum). Papers are due Friday Feb. 2; Friday Feb. 16; and Friday March 3. Use Blackboard to view instructions and submit.

Final Project: Throughout the second half of the semester you will develop a research project that will result in a final product of 7-9 pages (12-15 pages for graduate students). There are two options to choose from, and full instructions for each are on Blackboard.

There will be a drafting process involving an initial proposal (Feb. 23), progress check (March 29), and rough draft (April 12). These steps are ungraded, but *each* step you miss will result in a 10-point penalty on your final project’s overall grade. The final draft is due Tuesday April 30.

Presentation: Students will give 8-10-minute formal presentations of final projects during the last two class meetings. Presentations should be structured, practiced, and rehearsed ahead of time. You will receive feedback from your peers that you can use for revising the project before it is due.

Late work will be penalized 5 points for each day past the due date. Extensions will be granted *if deemed appropriate* when students submit a request in writing at least one week before the due date.

Other Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Attendance is not a calculated portion of your grade; it is a baseline expectation. Absences will be excused in cases of illness, family emergency, and religious observance. Frequent absenteeism without notification or excuse will result in the following penalties:

<u>Unexcused Absences</u>	<u>Result</u>
More than 2	Course grade drops by one letter
More than 3	Course grade drops by two letters
More than 4	F for the course

Undergraduate Grading Scale

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Clearly stands out as excellent performance
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Level of work is good to very good
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Level of work is satisfactory to average
D (60-69)			Work is below average and marginally acceptable
F (below 60)			Quality and/or quantity of work is unacceptable

MA Grading Scale

GMU's graduate grading scale stipulates a grade below 80 is unsatisfactory and below 70 is failing.

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Clearly stands out as excellent performance
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Level of work is acceptable to very good
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Work is below average and unsatisfactory
F (below 70)			Quality and/or quantity of work is unacceptable

Enrollment

You must be enrolled to attend this class. Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes:

Last day to add: Tues. 1/23

Last day to drop with 100% refund: Tues. 1/30

Last day to drop with 50% refund: Tues. 2/6

Withdrawal period: Wed. 2/7 – Tues. 2/20

Selective withdrawal: Wed. 2/21 – Mon. 3/25

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- failure to cite sources for quotations and ideas
- cutting and pasting text from other sources
- passing off another's work as your own
- purchasing or copying a paper found online
- reusing a paper you wrote for another course

I have a **zero tolerance** policy. Students who violate standards of academic honesty will earn a **zero** for the assignment and may fail the course or be subject to disciplinary action. More information can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at oai.gmu.edu.

AI Policy

Any text generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) text-generation tool (such as ChatGPT) is not accepted in this class as "the student's own work," and so will be considered similarly to published texts or texts composed or significantly edited/altered by another person. The use of such text without proper attribution is a violation of academic integrity.

Support Resources for Students

Accommodations

Disability Services (DS) at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Students can begin the registration process with DS at any time during their enrollment at George Mason. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu>, email ods@gmu.edu or call 703-993-2474.

I am committed to providing all accommodations approved by DS. Please note that faculty do not automatically receive notice of accommodations from DS, so please email me a copy of your letter to discuss how we will implement your approved accommodations.

LGBTQ+ Resources

While not a major topic of this course, this syllabus includes some material about histories of gender and sexuality. This virtual classroom is a Queer safe space for discussion of related issues relevant to the class. LGBTQ+ Resources “works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies.” <https://lgbtq.gmu.edu>

Diversity

This course is designed to grow your intercultural competency by providing you with the tools and vocabulary to speak in a knowledgeable and sensitive way about images made by creators from diverse backgrounds in North America; Latin America; Africa and the African diaspora; Australia; Asia; and Europe. I believe that by fostering willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources, we gain competence in communication, critical thinking, and global understanding, and become aware of our biases. See the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment <https://ccee.gmu.edu>

Emotional and Mental Support

College life and our current reality are complicated. Students may find it helpful to talk with a professional. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help address both personal and academic concerns. Services are free and confidential. <https://caps.gmu.edu>

Bereavement

Students dealing with loss are encouraged to speak with the Dean of Student Academic Life for their College. The Dean’s office can help you contact your professors and deal with the academic challenges of bereavement. CHSS students contact chssdean@gmu.edu.

Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

George Mason is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. As a faculty member and designated “Responsible Employee,” I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator.

Content Warning

I would like to notify students that we will discuss sensitive topics including racism, imperialism, looting, and the display of human remains, which help us understand the complex, and sometimes painful, histories of museums. I will try whenever possible to give additional warnings in class. If you do not feel comfortable with images or material at any point during class, you can quietly leave the room.

Course Calendar

Week 1

Tues. 1/16

TOPICS:
Course Policies and Expectations

READING (read this before your first museum visit, but we won't discuss it in class):

- Margaret Lindauer, "The Critical Museum Visitor," in *New Museum Theory and Practice*, ed. Janet Marstine (Wiley, 2005), 203-225. (GMU e-resources)

Part 1: The History of Museums

Week 2

Tues. 1/23

TOPIC:
Museum Origins

READINGS:

- John E. Simmons, "What is a Collection? What is a Museum?" in *Museums: A History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 1-10. (GMU e-resources)
- Mark A. Meadow, "Quiccheberg and the Copious Object: Wenzel Jamnitzer's Silver Writing Box," in *The Lure of the Object*, ed. Stephen Melville (Yale, 2005), 39-58. (PDF)
- Daniela Bleichmar, "Seeing the World in a Room: Looking at Exotica in Early Modern Collections," in *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, ed. Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall (UPenn, 2011), 15-30. (PDF)

Week 3

Tues. 1/30

TOPIC:
Art Museums

READINGS:

- Carol Duncan, "From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London," in *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, ed. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago (Ashgate, 2004), 250-278. (GMU e-resources)
- T.C. Horsfall, excerpt from "Art in Large Towns" (1882), in *Art and its Histories: A Reader*, ed. Steve Edwards (Yale, 1999), 69-72. (PDF)
- Constance Classen, "The Senses at the National Gallery: Art as Sensory Recreation and Regulation in Victorian England," *The Senses and Society* 15.1 (2020): 85-97. (GMU library e-resources)

DUE:

Short Essay #1 (by 11:59 PM on Friday 2/2)

Week 4

Tues. 2/6

TOPIC:

Natural History and Science Museums

READINGS:

- Charles Willson Peale, "My Design in Forming this Museum" (1792), in *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways and Mary Anne Andrei (Routledge, 2016), 23-28. (GMU e-resources)
- Carla Yanni, "Museum Vision: Sights Unseen Before," chapter 1 in *Nature's Museums: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display* (Princeton, 2005), 15-32. (GMU e-resources)
- Donna Haraway. "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," in *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, ed. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago (Ashgate, 2004), 242-249. (GMU e-resources)

Week 5

Tues. 2/13

TOPIC:

Ethnographic Museums

READINGS:

- Annie E. Coombes, "Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities," *Oxford Art Journal* 11.2 (1988): 57-68. (GMU e-resources)
- Susan Vogel, "Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion," in *Exhibiting Cultures*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Smithsonian, 1991), 191-204. (PDF)
- Andrew Dickson, "The Ghosts of Colonialism at the Pitt Rivers Museum," *Prospect*, Oct. 6, 2022: <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/society/60146/the-ghosts-of-colonialism-at-the-pitt-rivers-museum>

DUE:

Short Essay #2 (by 11:59 PM on Friday 2/16)

Part 2: The Museum Experience

Week 6

Tues. 2/20

TOPIC: Architecture, Space, and Text

READINGS:

- Michaela Giebelhausen, "Museum Architecture: A Brief History," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Blackwell, 2006), 223-244. (GMU e-resources)
- Elaine Heumann Gurian, "Threshold Fear," in *Reshaping Museum Space*, ed. Suzanne Macleod (Routledge, 2005), 203-214. (GMU e-resources)
- Pamela Z. McClusky, "Why is this here? Art Museum Texts as Ethical Guides," in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, ed. Janet Marstine (Routledge, 2011), 298-315. (GMU e-resources)

DUE:

Final project proposal with bibliography (by Friday 2/23 at 11:59 PM)

Week 7

Tues. 2/27

TOPIC: The “New Museology”

READINGS:

- Pierre Mayrand, “The New Museology Proclaimed” (1984), reprinted in *Museum International* 66 (2014): 115-118. (GMU e-resources)
- Katy Deepwell, “Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s,” in *New Museum Theory and Practice*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell, 2006), 64-84. (GMU e-resources)
- Eithne Nightingale, “Dancing Around the Collections: Developing Individuals and Audiences,” in *The Responsive Museum*, ed. Caroline Lang, John Reeve, and Vicky Woollard (2006; Routledge, 2016): 79-91. (GMU e-resources)

DUE:

Short Essay #3 (by 11:59 PM on Friday 3/1)

Week 8

SPRING BREAK

Part 3: Museum Ethics

Week 9

Tues. 3/12

TOPIC: Difficult Topics: Death, Suffering, and Racism

READINGS:

- Paul Williams, “Memorial Museums and the Objectification of Suffering,” in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, ed. Janet Marstine (Routledge, 2011), 220-235. (GMU e-resources)
- Jo Littler, “Introduction: British Heritage and the Legacies of ‘Race,’” in *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of Race*, ed. Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (Routledge, 2005), 1-17. (GMU e-resources)
- Mara Gladstone and Janet Catherine Berlo, “The Body in the (White) Box: Corporeal Ethics and Museum Representation,” in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, ed. Janet Marstine (Routledge, 2011), 353-378. (GMU e-resources)

Week 10

Tues. 3/19

TOPIC: Cultural Property, Provenance, and Looting

READINGS:

- James Cuno, “Culture War: The Case Against Repatriating Museum Artifacts,” *Foreign Affairs* 93.6 (2014): 119-129. (GMU e-resources)
- Louise Tythacott, “The Yuanmingyuan and its Objects,” in *Collecting and Displaying China’s “Summer Palace” in the West: The Yuanmingyuan in Britain and France*, ed. Louise Tythacott (Routledge, 2018), 3-24. (GMU e-resources)
- Barnaby Phillips, “Handing Back the Benin Bronzes” *Anthropology Today* 38, no. 5 (Oct. 2022): 1-2. (GMU e-resources)
- Michael Kimmelman, “Absolutely Real? Absolutely Fake?” *New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1991. (PDF)

Week 11

Tues. 3/26

GUEST LECTURE:

Frank Lord, lawyer and art historian

Head of Frank K. Lord IV, PLLC, a firm specializing in art and cultural property law

** lecture start time TBA (may start a bit later than usual class) **

DUE: Progress check on final project (due by Friday 3/29 at 11:59 PM)

Part 4: Contemporary Museum Issues

Week 12

Tues. 4/2

TOPIC: Museums in a Neoliberal World: A New New Museology?

READINGS:

- Robin Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited" *Museum Anthropology* 43, no. 1 (2011): 56-70. (GMU e-resources)
- Elise Couture-Stone, "Barriers to Entry: An Infrastructure of Exclusion in the Museum," *Medium*, Aug. 5, 2019: <https://medium.com/@elisecouture/barriers-to-entry-an-infrastructure-of-exclusion-in-the-museum-15623f83f28e>
- Kirsi Eräranta, Johanna Moisander, and Visa Penttilä, "Reflections on the Marketization of Art in Contemporary Neoliberal Capitalism," in *Museum Marketization: Cultural Institutions in the Neoliberal Era*, ed. Karin M. Ekström (Routledge, 2020), 19-33. (GMU e-resources)
- Nick Merriman, "30 Years after the New Museology: What's Changed?" *Prace Etnograficzne [Ethnographies]* 48, no. 2 (2020): 173-187. (GMU e-resources)

Week 13

Tues. 4/9

TOPIC: Digital Dialogues

READINGS:

- Chad Elias, "Whose Digital Heritage? Contemporary Art, 3D Printing and the Limits of Cultural Property," *Third Text* 33, no. 6 (Oct. 2019): 687-707. (GMU e-resources)
- Dana Allen-Greil, "Writing for Social Media in Museums: A Conversation in Eight Tweets," *Journal of Museum Education* 48, no. 1 (Feb. 2023): 29-40. (GMU e-resources)
- Zachary Small, "Museum Curators Evaluate A.I. Threat by Giving it the Reins," *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 2023. (GMU e-resources)

DUE: Rough draft of final project (due by Friday 4/12 at 11:59 PM)

Week 14

Tues. 4/16

Student Presentations

Week 15

Tues. 4/23

Student Presentations

DUE: Final Project (due by the following Tuesday 4/30 at 11:59 PM)